



Serving Children and Parents First Part II

Implementing Mayoral Accountability

Mayor Robert J. Duffy
City of Rochester, NY
March 29, 2010

“Mayoral control has a statistically significant positive effect on student achievement in reading and math at both elementary and high school grades”

– Dr. Kenneth K. Wong
Brown University Professor and a
leading expert in Mayoral accountability



To Rochester Parents and Taxpayers:

Enclosed in this report, “Serving Children and Parents First, Part II – Implementing Mayoral Accountability,” are additional components of my proposal for school governance reform.

I want to be as clear as possible as we await legislation about our vision for a brighter future for the partners and customers of the Rochester City School District. Our customers are city residents, and my duties and obligations to them as Mayor cannot and will not stop at the schoolhouse door. This document is not our plan, but rather it contains components that will be part of our future plan and direction.

In the previous document on this topic, “Serving Children and Parents First – Implementing Mayoral Accountability,” I conveyed the urgency of addressing the serious problems within City schools and provided a glimpse of our philosophy, which will place children and parents first when it comes to neighborhood schools, transportation and safety.

As Dr. Wong indicates on the facing page, a change in governance is not only effective, it can dramatically improve student achievement. What you will find in this report is evidence that shows how mayoral accountability is working in the New York City school system. There, more children are graduating on time. Fewer children are dropping out and more are receiving Regents diplomas. You will find the statistics/data compelling as you consider how this important change has the potential to change Rochester’s future.

In addition to the results of the New York City system, this report addresses parental involvement, the roles of principals, educators and staff, vocational training, college opportunities and consolidation of services.

Healthy and accurate public dialogue is necessary and I look forward to participating in every way possible. I will ensure that our citizens have every opportunity to participate as well. What I ask of you is to approach the topic with open minds and hearts and to place the interests of children at the forefront. A lot of misleading information has been put out by opponents of this change to avoid the real facts and data about our education system and its results. When analyzing the data carefully, you will find that mayoral accountability can and does work. We will succeed in reforming our current system and we can improve the chances of success for our children. I look forward to the day when the present fears and blind resistance to change are replaced with the resolve to work cooperatively to fix a broken system for the betterment of our children and our city.

Thank you,



Robert J. Duffy, Mayor
City of Rochester, New York

MAYORAL/CITY ACCOUNTABILITY—PROVEN RESULTS

New York City's experience has proven that a governance change can clearly make a positive difference in the academic lives of children. The New York State Education Department recently published the graduation rates for students entering their system between 2001 and 2005. Mayoral accountability was first implemented in the New York City School District in 2002. The report shows graduation rates have improved significantly.

- **Graduating on Time in Four Years.** 63 percent of NYC students entering high school in 2005 graduated on time in 2009 compared to 47 percent of students entering high school in 2001 who were scheduled to graduate in 2005. This 16 percentage point increase under mayoral accountability reflects consistent, steady annual improvement. In 2009, Rochester's four-year graduation rate was 46 percent.

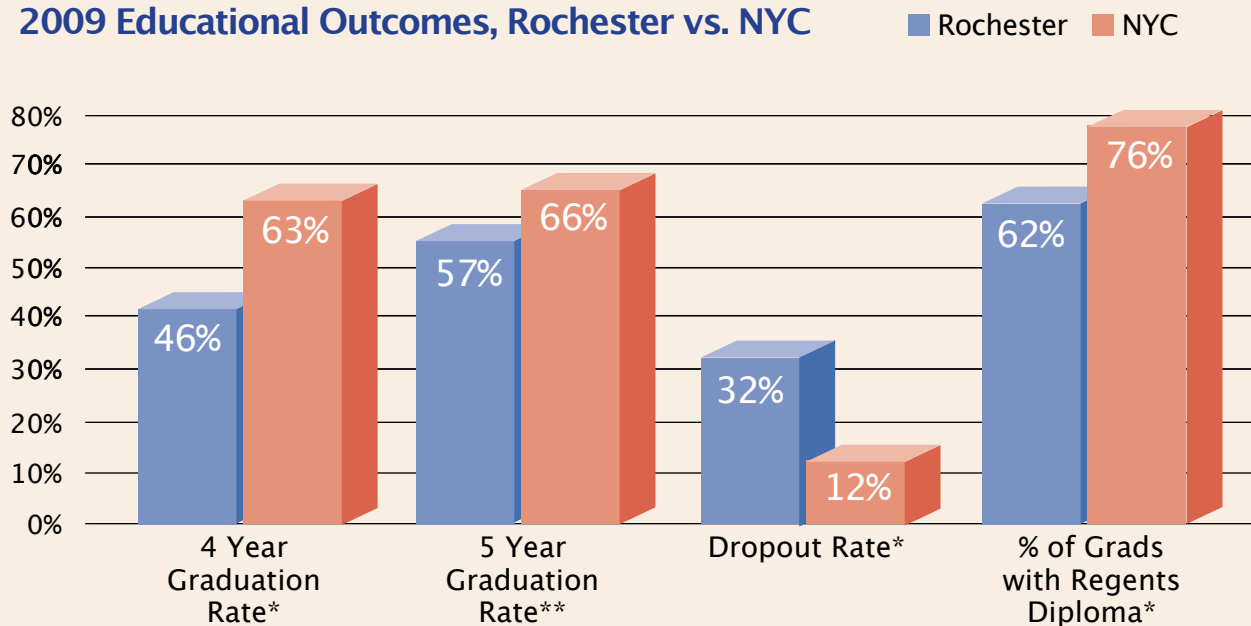
- **Graduating in Five Years.** In a five-year timeframe, graduation rates increase further, from 56 percent of the group entering high school in 2001 to 66 percent of the group entering in 2004 and graduating by 2009, showing a steady 10 percentage point improvement. In 2009, Rochester's five-year graduation rate was 57 percent.

- **Dropout Rates.** Dropout rates have decreased steadily and consistently in NYC since the implementation of mayoral accountability. Among students entering high school between 2001 and 2005, the dropout rate fell by almost 50 percent from 22 percent of the 2001 group to 12 percent of the 2005 group. In 2009, Rochester's dropout rate was at 32 percent.

- **Regents Diplomas.** The proportion of graduates receiving the desirable Regents diploma increased steadily and consistently in NYC. In 2005, 64 percent of graduates received a Regents diploma, compared to 76 percent in 2009. Sixty-two percent of the Rochester students who graduated in 2009 received a Regents diploma.

You can't dispute the facts and the truth. A change in school governance to mayoral accountability can and does work. Our children deserve no less. I am only asking to try something different for the next five years. With 46 percent graduation rates, we have nothing to lose by trying a new system.

2009 Educational Outcomes, Rochester vs. NYC



Source: NYSED. *Cohort entering ninth grade in fall 2005 and graduating by August 2009.

**Cohort entering ninth grade in fall 2004.

PARENTAL AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT



Everyone has a role and a responsibility for achieving breakthrough student success. The schools' most important partners in this effort are the parents, grandparents, guardians and other family members. They must be active participants in a child's education for them to succeed. They need to help with homework, make sure that children arrive and return safely from school, take part in extracurricular activities and provide a nurturing environment that encourages learning.

Under mayoral accountability, all city school parents and guardians will be welcomed and asked to volunteer a minimum of 40 hours per year at their children's schools. We will establish a Parent University that will give parents a chance to learn how to work in partnership with teachers, help children with homework or take on a volunteer leadership role. Parents and guardians will be welcomed into the schools and encouraged to understand their role and participate in their

children's education. Let's be clear that we cannot blame parents for a lack of participation when the current system creates barriers.

School Based Planning Teams will be restructured to allow for a greater role for parents and guardians in decision making. The current system is made up overwhelmingly of staff. It is our belief that this body should have parental representation of **at least 50 percent**. This will enable parents and guardians to increase their influence in such areas as school leadership, staffing and curriculum, monitoring the quality of food services and transportation, and participation in the overall school community. We will also take steps to ensure that no one person on the Team can veto changes that are aimed at improving students' education. Decisions should be voted on by a simple majority. The current system often thwarts change and maintains the status quo.

We will provide a "Family Navigator" in every school to help parents and guardians access wrap-around services from the District, City, County, State, not-for-profits and health systems. We will conduct annual surveys of parents and guardians regarding the needs of their children and schools and their input will be incorporated into City and Rochester School District operations. Our 3-1-1 system will allow for "One Call to the Rochester City School District" to ensure timely access to decision makers and streamlined resolution of problems.

PRINCIPALS AND STAFF

The key to successful schools is strong leadership from the principals, effective instruction from the teachers and an engaged staff. Every school must have an environment that supports student achievement. If current practices and procedures impede the creation of this partnership, then every step will be taken to address barriers facing principals, teachers, staff, parents and students.

Creating a culture of teamwork and success is vital. This may require successful contractual agreements with union leadership, as well as changes in state law. Truly listening to and engaging parents, students, teachers, staff and neighbors is the key.



VOCATIONAL TRAINING

It is our intention to transform the School of Applied Technology at Edison and restore it to the greatness of the Edison Tech of our past. It is our hope that the school will turn out students proficient in skilled trades that will serve all industries, whether that be construction, healthcare, emerging technologies, tool-and-die, machining or hospitality.

We will enter into a partnership with the various Trade organizations. Edison will become the “Center for Apprenticeship Training.” Trade members will teach vocational courses and provide “Certificates of Employability” in various skilled trades, leading immediately to apprenticeships, licenses or certificates upon graduation. The Building Trades will assume a much greater leadership role at Edison.

For all skilled trade professions, the City will seek provisions in law and in all District and City contracts requiring the hiring of such certified Edison students and graduates. We will seek federal and state funding to provide part-time work in an area that complements



the course study of students who maintain a 2.0 Grade Point Average. The work environment will allow them to earn money. We will provide valuable job training skills in their chosen trade and we will teach responsibility.

COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES

We will establish an “Office of Post-Secondary Education” (PSE) that will have satellites in every high school, in partnership with Rochester Area Colleges. Each PSE office will have a team of academic counselors working with students from Grades 9–12, with a comprehensive collection of college materials, information on financial aid and career opportunities designed to expand expectations of,

and information for, every student about their post-secondary options. Too many of our children are not even thinking about their lives after high school. We must raise hope and expectations.

District leadership and each school will be expected to track their students’ post-secondary placement and their rates of successful completion. While the District’s 46 percent graduation rate is alarming, what is also alarming is the poor graduation and certification rates once they enter a post-secondary environment. For example, of the 346 graduates from City Schools who matriculated at Monroe Community College in 2006, only 30 received an Associate Degree or certificate in a two-year period. Less than 9 percent were able to successfully graduate in that time. We want all of our children to succeed. Our hope is to learn from their track record of success and adjust our practices accordingly to increase the likelihood for achievement.



CONSOLIDATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY



Consolidation is necessary now more than ever in the current economic climate. We cannot and will not increase taxes on our city residents whose median household income is just \$29,000 per year. Under mayoral accountability, there will be no need to maintain two Law Departments, two Finance Departments, two Security operations or two Maintenance Departments. These are but a few examples of the opportunities that lie ahead.

Administrative operations between City and School District will be consolidated, with savings redirected into the classroom. We will ensure that there are enough textbooks, computers and supplies for all of our students. Presently, this is not the case. Funding decisions will be made to change this. We will increase participation in proven models such as the Hillside Work Scholarship Connection and strive to create the best after-school programming in the country.

We will hold Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard accountable for the success of his new Strategic Plan, including recommendations to close failing schools and replicate successful schools and models. Closing schools will not be the answer if the current systems that impede success are allowed to continue. These systems must and will change.

Consolidation of the City and the School District will enable us to proceed quickly to rehabilitate schools and build new facilities under the long-stalled Joint Schools Construction Board program. Included will be cutting-edge facilities for academics, performing and visual arts, sports, extra-curricular activities and Family Resource Centers for health, mental health, social services and literacy.

The State Comptroller issued an audit of the Rochester City School District on January 27, 2010. In it he found that, **“Rochester City School District officials failed to develop sound policies and take an active role in monitoring district finances... The lack of much-needed oversight allowed the former superintendent to grant \$164,550 in undocumented bonuses and raises, and \$36 million to be paid to contractors without the statutorily required review.”**

Under City governance, every educational dollar will be accounted for— so there will be no more findings by the State Comptroller of misuse of funds. The City’s Office of Public Integrity will investigate all charges of wrongdoing among District employees and vendors. We will have full accountability for every taxpayer dollar spent by the District.





For more information call 311.
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